

65th Anniversary Celebration of Montana's Apprenticeship and Job Training

(HELENA) --- Montana Electrical JATC (Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee) in partnership with the Montana Department of Labor and Industry's Apprenticeship & Training program, Montana PEAKS, Inc. and the Department of Health and Human Services will graduate 18 electricians from across the state on the 65th Anniversary of Montana's Apprenticeship and Job Training.

Yates Colby (42) of Kalispell is a vivacious and inspiring woman amongst 17 men completing their electrical apprenticeships today in a formal ceremony at the Colonial Inn. Colby, armed with an underutilized bachelor's degree in psychology, opted for an industry within construction she deems "gender friendly" that could truly put her in a high-wage, high-skill trade. Yates completed more than 8,000 on the job training hours and 900 classroom hours over a 5-year period.



*Courtesy of Women in the Trades
Calendar photographer Trevon Baker*

"She broke the mold becoming the first woman journey-person to graduate through the PEAKS program," said PEAKS director Mary Danford, "May her example inspire others."

According to State Apprenticeship Supervisor Mark Maki, apprentices earn 40 percent of a journey-person's wage and receive wage progressions every 1500 hours invested in the program. Prior to graduation, apprentices' such as Colby are earning as much as 90% of a journey-person's wage and will graduate the apprenticeship program without an educational debt load.

In 1941, the Montana Legislature passed an act forming the State Registered Authority based on the 1937 Federal Apprenticeship Law. Montana's first apprenticeship program was the Billings Carpenter's JATC, established May 2, 1946.

Currently the State Program has 1,270 apprentices registered in over 53 occupations, with more than 700 employer sponsors, located in 120 Montana communities.

- Apprentices earn an average hourly wage of \$16.33 per hour for an average annual gross wage of \$33,966.40
- Montana employers contributed approximately \$32,811,156 in gross wages to apprentices in fiscal year 2005.
- For every one dollar the state invested in the Apprenticeship and Training Program, employers paid \$96,000 in wages and apprentices contributed \$18.34 in state and federal taxes.

Historical data indicates that out of 1158 apprentices completing the Montana Apprenticeship and Training Program since 1997, 984 (84.2 percent) are still working in the occupation they completed apprenticeship in and are journey-person wage earners in Montana today.

When interviewed about her accomplishments she replied, "This program has given me the tools to go out and build America."